

Wheeling, IL -- U. S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Highland Park) invited John P. Walters, Director of National Drug Control Policy and President Bush's "Drug Czar" to visit the London Middle School in Wheeling today where they spoke to nearly 800 students about the dangers of illegal drugs and the myth that marijuana is harmless.

"Our children have the right to attend safe, drug-free schools," said Congressman Kirk. "President Bush has asked Director Walters to lead efforts to stop drug use before it starts, heal America's drug users, and disrupt the drug market. I am very pleased he could join us today to talk about our nation's progress in curtailing illegal drug use. We face a growing threat in our community from so-called 'club drugs' like Ecstasy. To better understand this threat, I have gathered two groups of experts from our community to advise and guide me as we work to protect our kids. My Drug Task Force and Student Leadership Advisory Board are made up of community leaders, drug prevention and treatment advocates and law enforcement officials as well as high school students who offer a first-hand look at the illegal drug problem in our communities. During today's meeting with Director Walters we discussed federal resources available to our communities and which initiatives to curb drug use have been successful."

During the assembly held in the school's gym, Director Walters spoke to the children about some common myths that marijuana use is not harmful. He told the students that of the 80,000 children age 12-17 that used an illegal drug in the past month, 63,000 had used marijuana. Joining Congressman Kirk and Director Walters to speak to the students was Kate Patton, who lost her daughter to an Ecstasy overdose and then worked with Illinois lawmakers to pass "Kelley's Law," stiffening the penalties for possession of Ecstasy and other club drugs. Mayor Greg Klatecki, Village of Wheeling, Mayor Arlene Mulder, Village of Arlington Heights and State Representative Sydney Mathias also participated in the two hour school visit.

Congressman Kirk, who sits on Speaker Hastert's Drug Task Force and co-sponsored the 'Ecstasy Prevention Act', introduced four Partnership for a Drug-Free America television commercials which were selected by his Student Leadership Advisory Board as the most effective in communicating an anti-drug message; 'What Would Make You,' 'Drowning,' 'Two Brothers,' and 'Frying Pan.'

Following the school assembly, members of Congressman Kirk's Drug Task Force, Student Leadership Advisory Board, School District 21 Board of Education members, and community leaders met privately with Director Walters to talk about prevention, education, and law enforcement efforts specific to the 10th District.